

Seven Easy Steps for Museums to Liberate the Plantations that Funded Them

To date, programs to “decolonize” museums or return looted objects have had surprisingly little impact on the communities whose labor financed many of these very institutions. This toolkit outlines seven clear steps to make good on the involuntary investment of plantation workers in museums and move from symbolic gestures toward material, cultural, and ecological liberation.

Step 1 – Identify the Debt

Research how plantation profits — past and present — funded your museum.

Step 2 – Publicize the Debt

Acknowledge publicly the contributions of plantation worker communities.

Step 3 – Establish Contact

Reach out to plantation communities.

Step 4 – Enable Informed Agency

Inform the community of what your museum is: historically, artistically, financially.

Step 5 – Learn from Plantation Workers

Listen to the communities’ priorities, demands, and visions.

Step 6 – Co-design a Program

Co-design programs that enable the community to begin reaping the benefits of their investment.

Step 7 – Formalize Collaboration if Desired and Exit When Asked

Institute joint decision-making and shared ownership of outcomes.



Scan for full Toolkit

Developed by Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) and Human Activities, this toolkit draws from the perspectives of plantation worker communities and Western art institutions to help museums rethink their origins, responsibilities, and futures. It is especially designed to guide museums built with profits extracted from plantation worker communities.



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